

## Whitening Antler

Antler comes in many varieties, and color can be an interesting feature. I once had a customer that specifically wanted the mottled gray features you sometimes (often?) find in antler. I am not talking about the porous center which I do not find all that attractive and try to minimize, but gray flecking as seen in this piece of axis deer antler that was rough-turned to shape.



This flecking can be interesting, but sometimes I just want white antler. I can't tell from the outside what I'll find when I start turning it. I believe this is an age effect – very fresh axis deer antler may be white, but if it's a little older it'll be gray.

Recently at a Tuesday night voice-chat we were talking about this, and Dan Furlano mentioned a product he had come across called 'skull whitener'.

<http://www.skullwhitener.com/pages/920307/index.htm> The product is a cream, but the active ingredient is hydrogen peroxide. I asked Kevin Bergen (retired dentist) what is used in tooth whitener, and he said in the old days they used 35% hydrogen peroxide (today's products are a little different because of safety issues with high concentration hydrogen peroxide). Also, Bonnie Klein uses hydrogen peroxide for whitening bone, but she had never had occasion to try it on antler. She found the super-market variety (3%) worked well for her. So I tried it.

It works! Here is the same barrel as above, after soaking for 48 hours in hydrogen peroxide.



Snow-white! Here's another barrel that was inserted ½ way



The bark color is NOT affected!

You can buy stronger hydrogen peroxide but it appears not necessary.

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